**Article 2: Falkland Islands’ Relationship with Argentina**

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The current Argentine administration has made the Argentine claim to our home a key part of its foreign policy agenda in recent years. In furtherance of this, the Argentine government continually makes a number of inaccurate statements relating to our history and our people. A number of these points are clarified below.

The Falkland Islands had no indigenous population prior to their settlement by our ancestors– the Islands were unoccupied. Argentina claims the Falkland Islands form part of the province of Tierra del Fuego – an area that was not claimed as a part of the Republic of Argentina until after two generations of Falkland Islanders had been born and raised in our Islands.

There is no truth to Argentine claims that a civilian population was expelled by Britain in 1833. The people expelled were an illegal Argentine military garrison, who had arrived three months earlier. The civilian population in the Islands, who had sought permission from Britain to live there, were invited to stay. All but two of them, with their partners, did so.

We are not an implanted population. Our community has been formed through voluntary immigration and settlement over the course of nearly two hundred years. We are a diverse society, with people from around the world having made the Islands their home.  We are no more an implanted population than are the various populations of South America whose ancestors arrived as immigrants from Europe – we arrived here as part of the same process and pattern of migration.

The UN Charter enshrines the right of all people to determine their own future, a principle known as self-determination. It is in exercising this right that we have chosen to retain our links with the UK. This fundamental right is being ignored by the Argentine Government, who are denying our right to exist as a people, and denying our right to live peacefully in our home.

We are not a colony of the United Kingdom; we are a British Overseas Territory by choice, which is something entirely different. We are not governed by Britain: we are entirely self-governing, except for defence and foreign affairs. We democratically elect our Legislative Assembly Members; they are chosen by the people of the Falkland Islands to represent them and to determine and administer our own policies and legislation.

We are economically self-sufficient, except for the cost of defence – for which there would be no need were it not for the claim made by an aggressive neighbour. Through our own efforts, our economy allows us to enjoy excellent health services and education provision, with Falkland Islanders studying for their A-levels and degrees overseas, paid for by the Falkland Islands Government. It is testament to the strong bond our young people have with their home that nearly all return on completion of their studies and having gained experience in their chosen fields.

The Argentine Government claims that the UK is exploiting the natural resources of the region; an absurd claim on a number of fronts. Firstly, we manage our own resources. Our farming practices are largely organic, our ecotourism industry is famous across the world, our fisheries are internationally acclaimed for their responsible management and sustainability, and our developing oil industry is managed by our Government and regulated to the highest international standards. Our environment is very much our home, and as such we value and protect it.

Whilst the Argentine Government’s calls for negotiations with the UK may seem benign, and a rational way to end the dispute, it should be noted that the Argentine Constitution requires the outcome of negotiations to be nothing but full Argentine sovereignty over our home. As far as we are concerned, sovereignty is not up for discussion. On all other fronts, we want nothing more than to have a relationship of cooperation for mutual benefit with Argentina and all of our neighbours. This has proved impossible in recent years. In 1995, we entered a joint agreement with Argentina over hydrocarbons exploration: in 2007 the Argentine Government tore this up. In 1999, the Falkland Islands signed a joint agreement with Argentina to co-operate in a number of areas, including sharing of information on joint fish stocks. Only the Falkland Islands has upheld its side of this agreement; the Argentine Government has unilaterally reneged on nearly every point.

More recent actions such as attempts to ban our ships from entering South American ports, Decree 256 which denies innocent passage of vessels transiting Argentine waters, the banning of charter flights in support of our tourism industry, laws threatening sanctions against companies involved in peaceful commerce in both countries, all point to a desire by Argentina to frustrate our international trade and attempt to isolate us.

The Falkland Islanders are a peaceful, hard-working and resilient people. Our society is thriving and forward-looking. All we ask is to be left in peace to choose our own future, and responsibly develop our home for our children and generations to come.